

Denise Amos

My husband and I had decided not to run in the Kentucky Derby Festival miniMarathon this year but would instead go to Indianapolis on Derby Day to run the 500 Festival Mini Marathon in Indianapolis. I had decided in the winter that if I was EVER going to run 13.1 miles, I had better do it in 2014. I would never be any younger, and since retiring, I had more time now than I have had in the last 33 years.

I began running about 3 ½ years ago, right after being afraid that I may have to give up walking for exercise and head to the swimming pool since my hips hurt all the time; even getting up from a chair or out of the car caused me lots of pain. Fortunately, I knew a physiology instructor at the University of Louisville who advised me to visit a marathon running chiropractor, David Vaught. On my first visit, he assured me that I would be able to walk races again and quipped that I probably could even start running. He still laughs about the look I gave him when he told me that I could run one day. I just hoped to get back to an upright position and walk some of the races my family liked to do together, maybe even the Derby Festival miniMarathon that we had signed up for.

From January, my first appointment, to April, I got stronger and was able to resume walking, even signing up to walk the 13.1 mile KY Derby miniMarathon. I hadn't felt that good in a long time!

Around that same time, skeptical of Dr. Vaught's suggestion, I decided to give *Couch to 5 K* a try and began adding a little running to my walks. Over the next several months, I competed in four local 5K running races, winning my age group in the Oldham County Grand Slam series. A runner was revived!

Since 3.1 miles was doable, I even decided to run 6... but never 13.1. I wasn't crazy or half crazy as some ½ marathoners like to say, to want to push my 58-year-old body that far; yet, my husband and children were running them. Maybe I could do just one!

It was a big running commitment, and I was nervous that I would be able to stay strong enough to do it. My husband assured me I could and agreed to run with me and help me train. Together we used Gallaway's marathon plan, where you run for 5 minutes and walk for one minute. Anytime we ran over 6 miles, about every third weekend, we used it, whether we (or I) felt like I needed it or not. Believing I could do it, we signed up to run the 500 Festival Mini Marathon in Indianapolis.

When I saw the opportunity to get a free Derby Festival registration, I jumped at the chance, and then had second thoughts about trying to do TWO races so close together. I didn't even say anything to my husband because I doubted I would win. When I did, he assured me we could adjust our training schedule and be ready to run a slow 13.1 by April 19, preparing us for race day on May 3. So we lengthened our long runs, until we finally ran 11.5 miles two weeks before the Mini-marathon. I was as ready as I was ever going to be!

Race day came, even with a final chiropractic adjustment of hips, feet and back, I was nervous. I kept saying to myself, "This is just another long run. You are capable. Don't run too fast. Take it easy. Have fun." And, well, I did!

It was a beautiful spring day, about 50 degrees at the start, and for the next 2 hours and 40 minutes, I ran a while, walked a while, took some pictures (spent at least 10 minutes in Port a Potty lines,) and joked with my husband.

I was surprised how fast the race went. There were lots to see: runners, spectators and landmarks. The walk breaks came fast, but more of a surprise was how fast the water and Power-Aid stops came. I wasn't tired or thirsty, but I took the fluids whether I felt like I needed it or not.

At mile 11 (remember the most I had ever run was 11 ½ miles), my right knee started hurting and kept hurting until I finished the race. While I walked to the car and finally crawled into bed Saturday night, I was a little worried I had damaged it. Easter Sunday morning, I woke up refreshed and ready to celebrate the day.

Of course, I will do another one in two weeks. And I guess deep down inside I am wondering if I'd like to do another one in the fall. Since 13.1 is a commitment of LOTS of weekends, I will have to see if running is how I want to spend them.

Thank you for the opportunity to RUN 13.1 miles. If I can do it, I believe anyone can.